

Appln. No. 10/762,124
Amdt. dated: April 6, 2005
Reply to Office Action dated January 13, 2005

Remarks/Arguments

These remarks are in response to the Office Action dated January 13, 2005. This reply is timely filed. At the time of the Office Action, claims 1-18 were pending in the application. Claims 1-10 were allowed. Claims 14, 15 and 18 were objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim. Claims 11-13, 16 and 17 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a). The rejections are set out in more detail below.

I. Allowable Subject Matter

Applicant notes with appreciation that claims 1-10 were allowed. Claims 14, 15 and 18 were objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but were indicated as being allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Claims 14, 15 and 18 have amended accordingly and now are believed to be in condition for allowance.

II. Claim Rejections on Art

Claims 11, 12, 16 and 17 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,766,082 to Hirabayashi et al. ("Hirabayashi") in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,406,196 to Uno et al. ("Uno"), and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,114,750 to Howard ("Howard"). In response, claims 12, 16 and 17 have been amended to depend from claim 14, which has been rewritten in independent form and is believed to be in condition for allowance. Claim 11 has been canceled.

Claim 13 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hirabayashi in view of Uno and further in view of U.S. Published Patent Application No. 2003/0039843 to Johnson et al. (hereinafter "Johnson"). Claim 13 has been canceled.

III. Conclusion

Applicants have made every effort to present claims which distinguish over the prior art, and it is believed that all claims are in condition for allowance. Nevertheless, Applicants invite the Examiner to call the undersigned if it is believed that a telephonic interview would expedite the prosecution of the application to an allowance. In view of

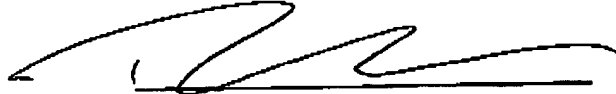
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the foregoing remarks, Applicants respectfully requests reconsideration and prompt allowance of the pending claims.

Respectfully submitted,

4-6-05
Date



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